



ROMANIA by Raluca Bîgu

Bîgu, R. (2012). Romania. In C. L. Glenn & J. De Groof (Eds.), *Balancing freedom, autonomy and accountability in education: Volume 2* (335-450). Tilburg, NL: Wolf Legal Publishers.

Overview

Since the fall of the communist regime over two decades ago, the Romanian educational system has undergone several reforms, most significantly with the adoption of two Education laws, one in 1995 (the first after 1989) and the most recent one in 2011, trying to catch up with the educational systems in Western Europe and the rest of the world. Still, the evolution of educational system in today's Romania cannot be fully understood without referring to Romania's years under Communist domination, when the education system was controlled by state and propagated false or deformed information. Moreover, the integration into European Union created new challenges to the educational sector, bringing it closer to the demands formulated on the labor market.

The communists ascending to power brought a radical change in the Romanian educational system, as schools were considered a platform to train the future "New Man", in the spirit of Marxist morality.¹ In these regard, since 1948, education was completely took over by the State, so "all the non-state educational institutions (except seminaries for training clergy of the State-dominated Romanian Orthodox and Catholic Churches) were nationalized"² and their movable and immovable assets confiscated. In addition, "schools under foreign sponsorship were abolished in July

1948, and their staff ordered to leave the country.”³

To see the educational system fully subjected to their interests, the communists needed a radical cleansing of the academic and teaching staff. Therefore, by a ministerial decision issued in June 1948, all the employment contracts of teachers in higher and secondary education were terminated by October the same year.⁴ The new power was now free to hire people who matched ideologically the goals of the Party. Most Romanian teachers went through a vast process of ideological “re-education”, being ordered to teach a strict controlled curriculum, from unique textbooks, mostly translated from Russian (until 1968). Moreover, the communists limited schools’ access for students with “unhealthy origins”, attempting the enrolment of over 50 percent of children from peasants and workers families. This “class fight” lasted until 1961-1962. This institutional measure was linked with the new idea of “democratization” of the educational system - the same principle responsible for the enrollment, in few years time after 1948, of all the children having the proper age (7 -11 years) into elementary education.

The educational system mirrored the Soviet model, changing everything from organizational structure and curriculum to textbooks, without taking into consideration the way it had evolved in the past. For example, the system changed in 1948 “from a mandatory and free elementary education with a duration of 7 years to a mandatory and free elementary education of 4 years, with the possibility to optionally attend the grades 5-7, which was a real set-back compared both to the European pedagogical progress as well as to Romanian progressive solutions, in force since 1925. Accordingly, the 8-year long gymnasium and high school courses were reduced to an average school, which lasted 4 years, then reduced to 3 years, by Decree no. 56/1951, just as in the USSR”, as explained in Rădulescu 2006.⁵

In addition, the curriculum set up by the communists included mandatory Russian classes, establishing a tradition of teaching Russian as a foreign language (in some cases as the first foreign language) that lasted in some Romanian educational institutions long after the fall of communism.

In the beginning of 1968, when a new education law was adopted, a feeling of relaxation from the soviet model blew over the Romanian educational system. This law required textbooks written by Romanian authors and a new highlight on industrial and agricultural educational institutions in order to cope with the country’s road to accelerated industrialisation. Nevertheless, this was not the first measure the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu took for the planned industrial future of Romania. Two years earlier, in 1966, by the Decree no. 770, Ceaușescu decided to ban abortions (legalised from 1957, following the Soviet model) with the clear intention to increase the population number, a necessary measure to step up his industrialisation plans. The measure had disastrous consequences: thousands of

women died undergoing illegal abortions, and huge numbers of children were abandoned or sent to orphanages to live in dire conditions.

In 1971, Ceaușescu visited Communist countries of China and North Korea and was impressed by the ideological agenda of the “cultural revolution”. This inspiration the influences was reflected in many of his policies throughout the 1970s, including in the 1978 education law that brought “accentuated politicization” and “the mandatory principle of the integration of education with production.”⁶

After the fall of Communism, the reform process was slow and the scars of a highly regimented system can still be seen in the educational practices. Nevertheless, some changes could be observed immediately, such as the re-opening of the Faculty of Sociology, Psychology and Pedagogy and the Institute for Educational Research, and the introduction of religious education on an optional basis.⁷

Despite post-communist developments, the system remains very centralized over the years, and the reputation the Romanian schools gained during the communist times (as preparing very competent pupils) vanished. The result can be seen in the fact that several studies indicate that Romania ranks significantly below the EU average and even neighboring countries in East and Central Europe in what concerns educational performances.⁸ This picture is aggravated by the fact that the system still provides very poor results when it has to deal with children from rural communities, belonging to disadvantaged minority groups (with the level of enrolment of Roma children significantly lower than the national average) or children with disabilities.⁹ In the last years, rural areas were confronted with hundreds of closed schools (mainly due to the migration phenomenon), with reduced and underqualified teaching forces, and with a high dropout rate than in urban communities.¹⁰

At the national level, one of the major challenges that the Romanian educational system is facing right now is the way the new Education Law (Law No.1/2011), introducing a per pupil-based funding system and a preparatory class for the 6-7 years olds, is going to be implemented. Until now, with major changes still wait implementation, the law is receiving a lot of media attention and controversy. The debates come in a general context of general mistrust in the performance of the Romanian educational system (with only 32 percent having a very good or good opinion about it), and in its capacity to prepare the graduates for their future life.¹¹

The structure of schooling

In Romania, the educational sector is controlled and managed nationally by Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, which acts in cooperation with

other ministries and institutions of the central Government.

The Romanian educational system can be seen on 2 levels:

A. Pre-Tertiary Level, structured in 5 cycles:

1. Early childhood education (0-6 years):
 - Level 1 (0-3 years)
 - Level 2 (3-6 years), composed of three grades
2. Primary education:
 - preparatory class (6-7 years) – a novelty for the Romanian educational system
 - elementary education – grades I to IV
3. Secondary education:
 - lower secondary education – grades V to IX
After finishing the IXth grade, pupils enroll in high school, on the basis of the average grade of grades V-IX
 - Upper secondary education (high school) – grades X to XII
4. Technical and vocational education and training, which can continue/replace high school, preparing pupils for jobs in manual or practical activities
5. Post-secondary non-tertiary education
The completion of secondary education is marked by “the maturity exam” (baccalaureate), a required condition for university studies

B. Tertiary/ Higher education, organized according to the principles of the *Bologna process*, consisting of four levels:

1. Bachelor – three years in most fields
2. Master – two years in most fields
3. PhD – three years

More than twenty years after a dictatorship where all education was public, 97- 98 percent of all the Romanian pupils (in elementary and secondary school) are still instructed in public institutions, while private education has a market share of approximately 2-2.5 percent, according to the latest data offered by the Romanian National Institute for Statistics (INS) for 2009-2010.

Early childhood education is optional from three to six years of age, and it is offered by both public and private institutions. Compulsory education in Romania comprises both primary and lower secondary education, until the age of 16.

Under the provisions of the Education Law, primary education is organized for pupils aged 6 to 10 and includes grades 1-4, and from the school year 2012-2013, the preparatory class. Lower secondary education comprises grades 5-9, including for the first time the 9th grade in the gymnasium – another great change brought by the new law. However, the measure will not be implemented until 2015.

On the decision level, the main institutions responsible for major decisions regarding the functioning of the educational system can be seen as operating on three levels.

The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports is the central authority in the Romanian educational system and is responsible, for pre-tertiary education, for the designation, implementation, application, and supervision of the national education policies, together with the coordination of the system. The ministry (through its affiliated institutions) sets up the mandatory part of the curriculum and the national assessment standards, approves the establishment and the structure of schools, and the distribution of financial resources for the schools.

At the second level, the School Inspectorate is an intermediate level of authority, subordinate to the Ministry, with one in every county, 6 in Bucharest (for each district), and a general one for the capital city. The main responsibilities of the school inspectorates in Romania include implementation of the policies of the Ministry of Education, controlling how the legislation is applied and the quality of the educational act and respecting the national standards of performance. Also, according to the Education Law, the school inspectorates are considered in charge with the management of the educational institutions. In this respect, they audit periodically the human resources from pre-tertiary education units.

At the last level, the schools are managed by a school board, composed by representatives of teachers, pupils' parents and local government. The school board is responsible for the school's organization and performance and for the way the financial resources are used.

The Romanian education system is still heavily centralized, especially in what concerns the curriculum and the funding, with few attributions left to school or local authorities. Moreover, the inspectorates are not perceived as decentralized institutions, but more as "voices" of the Ministry. Still, regarding the selection and employment of educational staff, the new Law brings significant changes regarding the authorities of the schools, by transferring the employment of teachers from the national level to the school level (still waiting implementation).

Under the provisions of the new Education Law, public education will be financed in Romania with at a minimum of 6 percent of GDP, compared with a minimum of 4 percent of GDP, stated by the previous Education Law. The education is funded from both state and the local budgets, but can be also funded by economic and private agents and institutions with legal personality. The novelty brought by the new Education Law is that the state offer a “basic funding” for each pupil in public, private and confessional primary and secondary education, and also for pupils in the public special post-secondary institutions. This funding takes the form of a standard sum for each student, established by the Ministry of Education, and it will “follow the pupil”, being transferred to the school he/she learns. Local and county councils can contribute from their own budgets to basic funding. Additionally, there are some other two types of funding, complementary and additional, adding to the whole picture. While complementary funding is assured by local authorities’ budgets, the additional funding (calculated as a fix global sum from the Ministry of Education’s budget) rewards schools with high performance or which implement programs for integrating disadvantaged categories of pupils.

The curriculum remains one of the subjects most associated with the idea of a centralized educational system, even if the new Education Law offer schools a greater flexibility in designing it. Basically, national curriculum for pre-tertiary education has two components: the core curriculum and the school-based curriculum. The core curriculum is common and compulsory for all pupils in public education and is established at the national level. The Ministry of Education sets up the mandatory subjects for all school and high school programs and detailed syllabi for these subjects. Meanwhile, the new Law states, private education institutions can choose to follow the core curriculum, or a similar curriculum, on the condition of being approved by the Ministry of Education. Generally, the school-based curriculum is composed by a set of subjects each school is offering to their own pupils. One interesting aspect is that this school- based curriculum is not composed only by disciplines that can be offered by the schools, but also from optional disciplines offered at the national, regional and local level.

Under the new Education Law, schools will have full responsibility in conducting selection, recruitment and employment process of their staff, on the condition that the process must be in compliance with the general provisions of the Education Law. More precisely, the selection will consists in competitions and interviews open to anyone who meets the requirements asked. The important aspect is that the competition is no longer organized at the national level, as in the previous law, but at the school level. The winners will sign a contract directly with the school and will be employed for a limited amount of time.

The legal framework

The legal framework of the organization, administration and provision of education in Romania is established through the Constitution, laws, governmental ordinances and ministerial orders.

In Romania, the basic principles regarding education are established by Constitution. Article 32, '*Right to education*', from Chapter II '*Fundamental rights and liberties*', includes most of the provisions in this regard, but other articles are also relevant. Constitution provides that the fundamental rights and principles stipulated in Constitution are: the right to education, ensured by the access to general compulsory education [Article 32, Section (1)]; national and ethnic minorities' right for education in their native languages [Article 32, Section (3)]; liberty of religious education, ensured for all denominations [Article 32, Section (7)]; principle of university autonomy [Article 32, Section (6)]; parents' right to choose the form of education given to their children [Article 29, Section (6)]. Furthermore, public education is free of charge and state must help people from disadvantaged categories to have access to education [Article 32, Section (4)].

The organization and functioning of the national education system, be it public, private or confessional, is regulated by new Education Law (Law 1/2011), which considers education a national priority and guarantees all Romanian citizens equal access rights to all levels and forms of education, without any discrimination. The Education Law is a comprehensive legislation that stipulates the general structure of the education system and has provisions for both pre-tertiary and tertiary education, for education funding and also for the statute of teachers. This law brings significant changes to the previous Education Law, issued in 1995.

The current management and administration of the education system is performed mainly at the national level through governmental decisions and ministerial orders, implementing the provisions of the laws. As a consequence, only a few important decisions are taken by legal acts of local government bodies.

Freedom to establish non-state schools

According to the provisions of the Education Law, all legal entities with juridical personality can establish and operate, on a non-profit basis, private pre-tertiary education institutions, with the agreement of the County School Inspectorates and following an accreditation procedure. Most of these schools are established by non-profit organizations. The private pre-tertiary education system is not well developed;

at present in Romania are approximately 150 pre-tertiary education institutions (schools, high schools, technical and vocational schools), enrolling only around 2-2,5 percent of the total number of Romanian pupils, according to the data offered by the Romanian National Institute for Statistics for 2009-2010. By comparison, the same data show that the number of private kindergartens is around 218, responding to an increased demand on the market few years ago. According to the data offered by the Ministry of Education in 2011, 70,000 pupils learn in pre-tertiary private accredited institutions, from a total of 3,200,000 pupils.

Confessional schools and high schools established by recognized religious denominations have the same status as other private schools. Although the Constitution specifically stipulates that school education can be provided by public, private or confessional schools [Article 32, Section (1)], there are no specific legal provisions for the last category. There are a few such confessional schools in Romania, established by some of the eighteen religious denominations recognized in Romania.

Private schools and high schools are part of the national education system and can receive financial resources from the state budget. Private pre-tertiary educational institutions and confessional schools should meet the evaluation standards for pre-tertiary educational institutions. These evaluation criteria are elaborated by The National Agency for Quality Assurance in School Education, an institution subordinate to Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport. The private and public school and high schools should meet the same standards – referring mainly to the teachers and management staff, the material basis of the educational institution, the number of children per class, etc. - and must follow the same accreditation procedure.

Most private educational institutions follow the national curriculum, but there are also a few (around ten) private schools and high schools following the educational system and the curriculum of another country. These are also subject to the same evaluation criteria (concerning material basis, the number of pupils etc.) as public Romanian educational institutions, but can be also accredited in the country whose educational system they follow. Some of these schools offer pupils the opportunity to take a high school graduation certificate internationally recognized. Furthermore, after some additional exams, these pupils can also take a high school graduation diploma specific to the Romanian system (the Romanian Baccalaureate).

Homeschooling

The Education Law stipulates that homeschooling (or schooling that can be settled in medical assistance centers) can be organized only for children that, for medical reasons or other disabilities, cannot be moved, have chronic diseases, diseases that

requires long medical assistance in hospitals, or are in a long convalescence but only for a limited amount of time. Homeschooling is managed by the county school inspectorates, at the proposal of County Centers of Resources and Educational Assistance, according to a framework-methodology, designed by the Ministry of Education. If the children are not in the situations mentioned above, the parents are not allowed to educate their children at home, even if in recent years, The Romanian Home Schooling Association (AHSR, functioning from 2002) fights for obtaining legal right for the children to be educated at home.

Still, in addition to the formal system of education, there is a widespread private tutoring system, organized as private lessons, which are offered for those who wish to improve their knowledge ahead of various evaluations and exams. In many cases, these private lessons are offered by the same teachers that pupils have at school, which create frustration among the rest of the class, given the suspicion that the pupil mentored at home is favored in class by the teacher. This type of practice, not explicitly banned in the previous Education law, is now prohibited.

School choice not limited by family income

One of the most important changes the new Education Law brought in Romania is the principle according to which “funding follows the pupil”, whether the pupil learns in a public, private, or confessional accredited school at the pre-tertiary level. Until now, the standard sum allocated for each pupil (“the basic funding”) was directed only to public schools, but beginning with the school year 2012- 2013, the state will pay the standard sum also for pupils who choose a private or confessional authorized pre-tertiary school. As a consequence, the families that previously encountered difficulties with enrolling their children in private schools due to the tuition fees will get a help, as it is supposed that the private schools fees will decrease. In this way, the number of children attending private schools will likely to grow in an educational system where 98 percent of the pupils are enrolled in public schools. Also, the measure will improve, at least theoretically, the competition among schools to attract pupils. However, given that the annual tuition fees in private schools vary from 1,600 Euros to almost 20,000 Euros, the standard cost for pupil that the state established for 2012 – a sum of 600-700 Euros for pupil, for example, in the case of lower-secondary education – will not help significantly the parents who encounter difficulties in paying the tuition.

In what concerns enrolling of children in areas outside the area they are living in, this is not related with the parents’ income. In Romania, every household is considered to be situated in the proximity of an elementary school, so the school will accept first the children considered in its area of proximity, and only after that, if it still has available places, children from other areas. If the number of these children exceeds the number of

available places remaining, the school will apply a number of criteria of selection, giving priority to children with handicaps, orphans, children with one parent working as a teacher etc. In the situation it still cannot choose after applying the criteria, the school will apply its specific criteria to select pupils, but these criteria should not be discriminatory and should not consist of any exams or testing. At the high school level, this condition of proximity disappears and pupils are enrolled on the basis of their results in the previous grades. In the case of private or confessional schools, there is no requirement for proximity at any level, so admission is granted in many cases after an interview or a discussion with the head master.

Distinctive character

Generally, in the Romanian educational system, schools and high schools have a low degree of discretion in developing a distinctive character. However, the new Education Law offer schools a greater opportunity in this regard. The Ministry of Education establishes the mandatory subjects for all school and high school programs, included in “the core curriculum”. These represent 80 percent of the total number of the school hours for the lower secondary level and 70 percent for the upper secondary level.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education has established a detailed syllabus for those subjects that should be generally followed. Three provisions of the new law can lead to the increase of the specific character of the schools. First, the number of optional subjects increases; second, in contrast to the previous law, the syllabi for the optional subjects are not subject to the Ministry’s approval anymore. Third, according to the new law, in opposition with the previous one, although the core curriculum is mandatory for all public schools, the private and confessional schools can follow, with the Ministry’s approval, a different (but similar) curriculum. Furthermore, the Education Law leaves some further discretion to the teachers concerning their teaching and textbooks. In any case, these new provisions, not fully implemented yet, will probably not radically change the overall situation, since private pre-tertiary education does not represent a significant percentage in the total pre-tertiary sector.

In the private sector, there are schools that present themselves as offering a different “school philosophy”, more focused on pupils’ individual development or on Christian values. There are also schools which uses alternative pedagogical methods. In present, Freinet techniques, Montessori pedagogy, curative pedagogy, Jena Plan, Step by Step program and Waldorf education system are the educational alternatives recognized by state. According to the law, these schools have a greater freedom in choosing their policy.

Decisions about admitting pupils

In Romania, public and private schools are not allowed to discriminate among pupils, on any basis, in order to maintain the distinctive character of the school. According to the Education Law, the Romanian state guarantees Romanian citizens equal rights to all levels and forms of pre-tertiary and tertiary education, and also to lifelong learning, without any form of discrimination.

Still, at the primary level, public schools can decide on admitting pupils, in the situation when, after enrolling pupils from their proximity, the school still has some free places, and cannot decide between prospective pupils from other areas on the basis of the general principles given by the Ministry of Education. Then, the school is allowed to elaborate specific principles to select, on the conditions that these principles shouldn't be discriminatory or involve any exams and examinations.

In what concerns private schools at primary and lower secondary level, these can decide on the acceptance of pupils, after a discussion with the prospective pupil and parents in the headmaster's office, or by analyzing the previous results of the candidate. At upper-secondary level, the procedure for admitting pupils is based on the average mark resulted from the national examinations and from the grades V-IX. Each pupil will submit a preference list of high schools, and a centralized computer system will allocate the pupil to a high school, in order of their marks.

In the case of private high schools, even though in most cases, the procedure involves a file-based selection, these have the right to conduct interviews (sometimes eliminatory) and psychological examination with prospective candidates and to organize a special sessions of exams in certain disciplines. Some of these private high schools are even using a "head-hunting" system, recruiting pupils with exceptional results from gymnasium, and proposing them to enroll in their institution, by offering scholarships and other benefits, an example being the International Computer High School of Bucharest.

Decisions about staff

One important change brought by the new Education Law states that the selection, recruitment and appointment of teachers in pre-tertiary schools will be conducted by schools alone, while according to the previous law the competitions were organized by school inspectorates, at the county level.

The exams are open to all those who comply with specific criteria set by the Education

Law and the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation. While for public pre-tertiary education, recruitment and appointment of the teachers is accomplished through competitive examination, in the case of private schools, the process is accomplished through open recruitment, sometimes bringing teachers from abroad, selected at teachers' recruitment fairs. At the level of requirements, private schools usually ask from the candidates what the law stipulates, namely that they graduate in the area they want to be hired to teach, an MA (which will take the form of a pedagogical MA, when the new Law on education is implemented in this regard), and graduating from a pedagogical module during university studies. Also, these schools ask for a rich professional experience and sometimes for mastery of a foreign language. As for other requirements that should orientate the selection of teaching staff (such as religion), the law does not specifically prohibit such requirements.

Also, departing from the previous law, the new Education Law stipulates an initial training of teachers, composed of three stages. The first stage consists in specialized university studies; the second is a pedagogical MA of 2 years, while the third consists in a probationary year in a school, under the supervision of a mentor teacher, after competing for vacant places or by assignment by the county inspectorate for the places remaining unfilled. After this stage, the teachers should pass an exam at national level (definitivat), in order to be employed with an indefinite term contract.

Special qualifications and competencies are required only from teachers who will teach classes in one of the languages of national minorities. These teachers have the right to be trained in the mentioned languages both in Romania and abroad.

According to the Education Law, the persons belonging to national minorities have the right to study in their maternal language at all the levels, types and forms of pre-tertiary education. The classes in the languages of national minorities are established at the request of parents (or legal guardians) of children. In those classes, all subjects are taught in the maternal language of the pupils, with the exception of "Romanian language and literature", taught in Romanian - this last one using a curriculum and textbooks elaborated especially for minorities.

Accountability for school quality

The main institutions responsible for setting the standards and evaluation of the pre-tertiary education institutions, both public and private, are The National Agency for Quality Assurance in School Education (in Romanian ARACIP), a national-level institution subordinate to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, and

the school inspectorates, the county-level institutions, subordinate to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport.

For their evaluations, ARACIP uses external collaborators, experts in evaluation and accreditation, registered in the Register of experts for evaluation and accreditation. The main responsibilities of ARACIP are to elaborate and bring up to date the quality standards for the evaluation and quality assurance in pre-tertiary education, to realize the accreditation process and the regular evaluation process of accredited education institutions. The ARACIP's evaluation focuses mainly on input indicators, such as material basis, the maximum number of pupils in a class etc, or on process performance. The public and the private institution are subject to the same standards and procedure.

The accreditation procedure for educational institutions has two steps: temporary functioning authorization, which gives the unit the provisional right for functioning, and accreditation, which offers full rights to the institutions. The education institutions that have a "temporary functioning authorization" are committed to request the accreditation a maximum 2 years after the first graduation from the primary or secondary level; otherwise, the temporary functioning authorization could be lost. After accreditation, ARACIP evaluates regularly the pre-tertiary education institutions and, as a result of this, the accreditation can be removed.

County school inspectorates evaluate and monitor, by school inspections, the performance and the management of educational institutions or the performance of an individual teacher, as a condition for obtaining his certification. The general school inspections evaluate the whole activity of the school or certain aspects of them.

However, the external evaluation system of pre-tertiary education institutions, based on ARACIP and county school inspectorates, does not provide a high degree of accountability. The cases in which pre-tertiary education institutions lose their accreditation are rather exceptional. In the same time, there is no formal mechanism by which schools with poor results at school inspection are sanctioned. Moreover, for schools and high schools, there is no test-based system of sanctions and rewards. Also, there is no coherent accountability system by which the poor results obtained by a school or a high school at the national examinations organized at the end of the lower secondary level or, respectively, at the end of upper secondary level lead to sanctions.

Generally, the Ministry of Education, by the county school inspectorates, can use two instruments for sanctioning low-performing schools and high schools: one involves

closing and the other reducing their enrolment figure (the number of pupils that the schools can enroll in a school year). For instance, by a ministerial order issued in 2012, all high schools with a pass rate below 15 percent at the national examinations will have their enrollment figure decreased in the next school year. According to the previous Education Law, as measure of sanctioning the bad management or the bad results of a certain school, the school inspectorates could dismiss the head master. However, under the new law, the headmaster can be dismissed only by the school board.

Teaching of values

According to the current educational legislation, the educational ideal of the Romanian schools (be it public or private) consists in the free, full and harmonious development of the human individuality, in the formation of an autonomous personality, and in assuming of a system of values necessary for personal fulfillment, developing the entrepreneurial spirit and the active civic participation in society. Beyond these, the law stipulates a number of principles governing pre-tertiary and tertiary education, among which the principle of liberty of thought, of independence from any ideologies, religious dogmas, and political doctrines, and the formation of a world view, based on humanistic and scientific values. Moreover, in all educational institutions, the law prohibits any activities that violate moral norms and can put in danger the pupils and the teachers, but also political activities and religious proselytism.

However, in what concerns teaching religion in public schools, some NGOs charged that these principles and the Constitution were in contradiction with studying religion, in a confessional manner, for 13 years (beginning with the school year 2012- 2013, after including the preparatory class in primary education) in Romania, as a “part of the core curriculum”, without offering any alternative subject of study.

In public education, the extent to which the schools can impose specific “values” is reflected in their offer of optional courses, as a part of the school-based curriculum that adds to the core curriculum established by the Ministry of Education and other relevant actors in educational field. According to the new law, the school-based curriculum will be established by the school board, after consultation with pupils, parents, and taking into consideration available resources. Also, the syllabus for these optional subjects is established at the school level and will be approved by the school board. In many cases, these optional courses include IT training, foreign language skills, entrepreneurial and financial education, rhetoric and argumentation, protection of the environment, or history subjects insufficiently covered in the textbooks, such as the history of communism in Romania or the Holocaust.

Also, in public schools, the teacher can choose the textbook to be used from a series of alternative textbooks, approved by the Ministry of Education. In recent years, choosing of textbooks proved to be a controversial issue in the field of textbooks teaching orthodox doctrine, as some NGOs accused certain textbooks of altering the moral development of children by offering them a distorted view of sin and divine punishment.

By comparison, private education proves to be more flexible in imposing a certain set of values or a “school philosophy”, as some private schools follow their own curricula and syllabi, more concentrated on cultivating children’s autonomous personalities and judgment, integration into multicultural societies, and preparation for continuing their education abroad. Also, there are some private schools and high schools, where children receive an education oriented by Christian principles, although following national curriculum (as in case of Richard Wurmbrand High School, Iasi).

In what concerns confessional schools, the plans that some denominations have for creating primary schools institutions (in addition to the existing kindergartens, like the ones conducted by Orthodox and Greek-catholic denominations), show that besides following core curriculum, the children will receive a Christian orthodox education, having, for example, the possibility to study other theories regarding evolution than Darwinism.

On the other hand, not the values, but the abundance of information given to the pupils (a remnant of the communist times) is considered a problem of the educational system in Romania. According to the latest poll by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES) from 2011, 8 of 10 respondents thought the Romanian educational system is centered too much on information, and too little on the development of competencies. Also, over 60 percent of those asked believe that pupils’ schedule is too busy. More generally, and touching also the problem of teaching values in schools, an overwhelmingly percent of 81 percent of those asked thought that the educational system, as it is now, prepares the pupils very poorly for what will follow in life.

Endnotes

¹ The historical retrospective draws from Giurescu 2001, Glenn 1995, Rădulescu 2006 and Fundatia Dinu Patriciu, Media Report, 2010.

² Balasoiu, Sima, and Glenn, 2004.

³ Ibidem, 91 apud Illyés 1982,169, 293.

⁴ Giurescu 2001, 9.

⁵ Rădulescu 2006, 3.

⁶ Giurescu 2001, 20

⁷ Balasoiu, Sima, and Glenn, 2004.

⁸ World Bank, 2007.

⁹ OECD, 2003, pp. 287-290.

¹⁰ OECD, 2003, p. 278.

¹¹ IRES, 2011.

References

Websites:

Eurybase Romania 2007/2008, Eurydice (www.eurydice.org)

Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport (www.edu.ro)

National Institute of Statistics (www.ins.ro)

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in School Education (www.aracip.edu.ro)

Legislation:

Constitution of Romania (English)(<http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=371>)

Education Law No.1/2011 (Romanian)(http://www.uaiasi.ro/ro/files/legislatie/LEGEApercent20nr.1_05.01.2011_Legeapercent20educatiei.pdf)

Law No.128/1997 on the Statute of the Teaching Staff
(Romanian)(http://www.mmuncii.ro/pub/imagemanager/images/file/Legislatie/LEGI/L128-1997_act.pdf)

Bibliographical References

Reports:

Învățământul românesc între anii '30 și 1989, Media Room, Fundația Dinu Patriciu, 2010

(English) (https://www.fundatiadinupatriciu.ro/ro/media_room/stiri/381/)

National synthesis about educational systems in Europe, 2011, Romania, European Commission

(Romanian)(http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/o47_RO_RO.pdf)

OECD, Reviews of National Policies for Education. South Eastern Europe. Volume 2. 2003

Organization of the education system in Romania 2008/2009, European Commission (English)(http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/RO_EN.pdf)

Perceptions on the educational system in Romania, Research report and survey, September 2010 – September 2011

(Romanian)(http://www.ires.com.ro/uploads/articole/ires_indicatori-de-perceptie-pentru-sistemul-educational-din-romania_raport_cantitativ.pdf)

Report on the State of Education 2008, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, 2008 (Romanian)(<http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/10913>)

Report on the State of Education 2009, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, 2009 (Romanian) (<http://administrasite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/12926>)

Report on the State of Education 2010, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, 2010 (Romanian) (<http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/15128>)

Reviews of National Policies for Education: South Eastern Europe, Volume 2, OECD, 2003
Romania Education Policy Note, Word Bank 2007

(English)(<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTROMANIA/Resources/EducationPolicyNote.pdf>)

Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe, Romania, 2009/10 Edition, 18

European Commission
(English)(http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/structures/o41_RO_EN.pdf)

Books And Articles

Balasoiu, Carmen, Elena Sima, and Charles Glenn, "Romania," in *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education*, edited by Glenn and Jan De Groof, Tilburg: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2004.

Giurescu, Dinu C. - "Învățământul în România între anii 1948 și 1989", 2001, (<https://www.fundatiadinupatriciu.ro/uploaded/Invatamantulpercent20inaintepercent20depercent201989/68.pdf>)

Glenn, Charles L. - *Educational Freedom in Eastern Europe*. Washington, DC: Cato, 1995.

Illyés, Elemér - *National Minorities in Romania: Change in Transylvania*, Boulder: East European Monographs, 1982.

Rădulescu, Dan C. - "Învățământul românesc 1948 – 1989 – între derivă și recuperare instituțional - funcțională", *Calitatea vieții*, Editura Academiei Române, nr. 3-4, 2006